



News for Immediate Release
March 4, 2004

Contacts:

- [James Coe](#), Division of Flood Management, (916) 574-0622
- [Keith Swanson](#), Division of Flood Management, (916) 574-1302
- [Don Strickland](#), Information Officer, (916) 657-4469

DWR SCHEDULES PAJARO RIVER PUBLIC FORUM

The Department of Water Resources will hold a public forum in Watsonville on March 11, 2004, regarding the costs of State operation and maintenance of the Pajaro River Levee Project in and near Watsonville.

DWR representatives will confer with Santa Cruz County officials at the 7:00 p.m. meeting at E.A. Hall Middle School, 201 Brewington Avenue, Watsonville. The forum is a response to a protest from the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors over the Statement of Necessary Work and cost estimate that DWR submitted to the County on January 8.

That cost estimate was prepared by DWR as part of the process of assuming operation and maintenance of the 11.2 mile north levee of the Pajaro River, the 4.3 miles of levees on Salsipuedes Creek, and the related channels. The estimate of \$659,900 for the first year includes the cost of operating and maintaining the levees and the creek channel, a portion of the cost of maintaining the river channel, and the first-year costs of establishing a DWR operation and maintenance office, providing vehicles, providing flood fight materials, and initial inspection and engineering and environmental support from DWR headquarters.

The second year cost estimate of \$456,000 is lower because of reduced need for inspection and headquarters support, no purchase of vehicles or flood fight materials, and no office establishment. The State and Monterey County (which maintains the 9.3-mile south levee of the river) have initiated negotiation of a contract for reimbursement of that county's share of the cost of river channel maintenance.

The new maintenance area will be the 18th established by DWR. Properties to be included will be those actually protected by the levee project when it is carrying the flow of water for which it was designed. At the hearing, DWR will display drawings showing the approximate extent of the protected area. However, determination of the boundary of the protected area is not the subject of this hearing, and questions regarding inclusion or exclusion of properties will not be addressed. Final determination of the area will take place only after an additional

formal public hearing on that subject, which will be advertised in advance and held in the Watsonville area.

Background Information

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed the Pajaro River Levee Project on January 22, 1949. Santa Cruz County and Monterey County have maintained the project since that time. On February 25, 2003, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors resolved that the County “no longer desires to own, operate, or maintain the Pajaro River Levee Project.” Following such a resolution, California law requires that DWR assume maintenance of the project indefinitely, or until an appropriate local governmental entity is found to take over. Under the current schedule, State maintenance is expected to begin on July 1.

DWR’s Statement of Necessary Work states that its ongoing responsibilities include routine maintenance required to meet federal standards, supervising, inspecting and reviewing the maintenance, providing engineering and environmental support, acquiring annual materials stock, arranging for vehicle service, renting heavy equipment, hiring supplemental labor, obtaining required permits, and renting an office. Additional first-year activities include acquiring vehicles and equipment, stocking flood fight materials, and establishing an office. The effort required for supervising, inspecting and reviewing the maintenance and for engineering and environmental support is expected to drop after the first year.

Levee operation consists of fighting floods by sandbagging, protecting slopes with plastic, and other techniques. The costs of these activities may be substantial, but they are not known in advance and are not included in the estimates. Charges for flood fight operations will accrue to the State in the fiscal year following the flood fight, and will be included in the assessments for that year.

State operation and maintenance of the levee project will be paid for by assessment of the properties which receive flood control benefits from project operation and maintenance. The State will establish a maintenance area that will include such properties, and the County government will collect the assessment along with other county assessments and taxes.

The first year’s total assessment will be based on DWR’s estimate of the first year costs and any adjustments that result from the March 11 hearing. In succeeding years, the total assessment will be based on DWR’s estimate for the year to come, established annually after a public hearing, plus any cost increase or minus any decrease in the just completed year. By law, costs in any year may not exceed 120 percent of the year’s estimate.

The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

[Back to Top of Page](#)

Visit [Archived News Releases](#) or return to the [DWR Home](#)

Contact the [DWR Office of Water Education](#) for more information about DWR's water activities.